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*Captain's Call*

CNO: Diversity a Leadership Issue

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- Speaking at the 33rd annual National Naval Officers Association (NNOA) Conference in New Orleans Aug. 12, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Mike Mullen said diversity continues to be a leadership issue and critical to the Navy's future success.

"We need leaders from and for every single part of our Navy," he said. "Our leadership should reflect the nation we represent."

Mullen took the opportunity during his comments to thank the NNOA specifically, saying the association was "critical to helping our Navy improve diversity." He also said he needed their leadership, as well, and encouraged NNOA's members to mentor other, more junior officers and enlisted personnel.

The Navy is certainly a more diverse force than it has been in the past, Mullen noted, but leaders cannot rest on their laurels.

"A lot has been done, but we are still in a pioneer world," Mullen said, referring to the fact that though many more opportunities now exist for minorities and women in the Navy, much can still be accomplished.

The CNO said he will concentrate on this area specifically during the next four years.

For example, he wants to improve the number of women and minorities filling both senior officer and enlisted billets, and increase the number of women serving in enlisted technical ratings.

"My intentions are to take big steps each year, for four years," said Mullen. "I believe we need to take more risk in this area than we have in the past. I believe from my heart that diversity strengthens the very fabric of who we are."

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